



MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION FOR RESOURCE ISSUES THREATENING OCEANS (MERITO)

MONTEREY BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

THE ISSUE:

There is a need to provide our constituent base with an understanding of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) and the issues facing the sanctuary. The Hispanic community represents the fastest growing population in the California central coast region and currently comprises 32% of California's population and 47% of Monterey County's population.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Merito is a Spanish word meaning "merit" or "worth." The MERITO (Multicultural Education for Resource Issues Threatening Oceans) program is committed to providing programs and materials geared for diverse multicultural communities. Prior to implementation of this program, a limited number of bilingual programs and resources were available to Spanish-language citizens within the National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP), and its 13 sanctuaries. The initial focus of the effort, launched in 2001, was to identify target audiences within our Hispanic community, and to work collaboratively to develop effective

bilingual outreach and education programs addressing priority MBNMS resource management issues.

Based on needs identified through an assessment process, the MBNMS seeks to develop and deliver bilingual outreach programs and materials that will successfully inform Hispanic citizens about threats to marine and coastal environments. The programs that presently comprise the MERITO plan were developed in direct response to the issues and needs identified by our Hispanic communities. An overview of current programs follows.

OUR GOAL

The sanctuary's goal is to increase protection of sanctuary resources by building a greater understanding of ocean-related threats within our diverse communities and by providing opportunities to engage in marine protection.



Community field experience at Elkhorn Slough